/114/

121 I shall describe to you in the following some aspects of the social structure of the same Indian tribe whose conceptions about the soul Herr Dr. Zerries has just discussed. The title, "Sociology," is too presumptuous, insofar as today I intend to deal with only the larger social units and thus touch upon only a small sector of the sociological field. I shall be able to present to you only raw expedition-material; the comparative arrangement of these data in South American cultural history will be the work of the next few months.

101 131 The Waika /Waica/ inhabit the upper Orinoco river region in southern Venezuela; their area of habitation, however, is not limited by the Sierra Parima, in which the Orinoco rises and which forms the mountain border with Brazil, but rather extends into Brazilian soil far beyond this mountain chain, about to the middle of the northern tributaries of the Rio Negro and Rio Branco. [161] The Sierra Parima therefore is more the backbone of the living space of this Indian group, which, according to the best estimates, contains about fifty thousand persons and an area of about half 137 the size of West Germany. According to external appearances, [132] this region is counted as tropical rain forest; seasonal differences are only slight and are practically without influence on the life 101 and culture of the people. The critical cultural importance of the 179 forest lies in its isolating effect: between the habitation area of [137] the Waika and the first mixed settlement there extends an almost [487] uninhabited forest-belt several hundred kilometers wide, and since there is very little river traffic and as other means of transportation there are only onerously traversable Indian paths, the culture of the Waika has been able to remain almost completely pure. Only a [197] few material things from our world have as yet found their way to them: a few machetes and axes, a few matches and fishhooks, which an American mission working from 1947 to 1955 under very difficult conditions and we ourselves brought along; since the Waika do not maintain any contacts of their own downriver, however, the barely begun acculturation process does not go on /115/ by itself, but ebbs away the moment the visiting whites leave Waika country.

/2 cont./

• 132 Because of the nearness of the equator, it is very hot, humid, and oppressive in this region, yet not unbearable. For, on account [164] of the high moisture content of the air, there is, for example, no heat prostration and no sunstroke here. One can also sleep quite well at night, since the temperature then drops several degrees and is accompanied by a refreshing breeze. During the day the temperature of the air comes to 32-36° and at night 24-28°, whereas that of the water is usually between 29-32°.

136 As a result of the scarcity of human beings that prevails here, there are a great many wild animals and birds in the forests, in addition to the abundance of water turtles, caymans, and fish in the rivers, several species of which will be enumerated in the following:

a) Mammals: spotted jaguar (Felis onca L.), black jaguar (Panthera onca L.), puma (Felis concolor), maracajá (Felis pardalis Neuw.), tapir (Tapirus americanus Briss.), deer (Cervidae sp.), wild pig (Pecari tajacu), capybara (Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris Erxl.) paca (Cuniculus paca L.), cutia (Dasyprocta aguti L.), armadillo (Dasypodidae sp.), sloth (Bradypus sp.), ant bear (Myrmecophaga sp.) monkeys, such as the howling monkey (Alouatta sp.), cuxiú-negro (Chiroptes satanas Humb.), cuatá (Ateles paniscus L.), macaco-da-noite (Aotus infulatus), etc., sea cow (Trichechus inunguis Desmaret), etc.

b) Birds: mutum (Crax sp.), urumutum (Crax sp.), mutum-cavalo (Mitu mitu L.), jacamim (Psophia crepitans L.), cujubim (Pipile pipile cajubi Pelz.), jacu (Penelope sp.), japim (Cacicus cela L.), inambu (Crypturellus sp.), inambu-relógio (Crypturellus strigulosus Temm.), toucan (Rhamphastus /3/ sp.), arara vermelha (Ara macao L.), arara amarela (Ara ararauna L.), papagaio moleiro (Amazona sp.), papagaio curica (Amazona sp.), garça branca (Casmerodius albus egretta Gm.), gavião-real (Thrasaetus harpyia L.), gavião-caipira (Hypomorphnus urubitinga urubitinga Gm.), urubus (Cathartes foetens, Cathartes aura, etc.), etc.

c) Water turtles: tracajá (Emys sp.), cabeçuda (Podocnemis dumeriliana), etc.

d) Land turtles: jabuti (Testudo tabulata Woelb.), etc.

/66 cont./

000 and after that a small celebration takes place. Later the women
841 do not make any arrangements for concealing the monthly bleeding from the eyes of the other /67/ members of the tribe, including the children. They do avoid walking about a great deal during these days, and, if the blood flows too copiously, they sit on the bank of the nearby river or brook.

i) Initiation rites for young men

884 All young men who have reached the age of approximately
●132 20 years must submit to an initiation rite. It always takes place at the beginning of the dry season, between October and December, halfway between their winter quarters and the large, open maloka where the two tribes spend the summer together and cele-
884 brate the great festival in memory of the dead. In an inter-
86 mediate camp of this type (for a description of the intermediate camp of the Surára, see p. 23) two young men are always trained for two months by the chief and an experienced helper (Hewemão and his brother Kurikayawõ among the Surára; Karenauõ and the war chief Porẽhiwõ among the Pakidái) in all matters of religion, magic, mythology, curing the sick, and tribal tradition. Only after that are they regarded as full members of their community and from then on may independently undertake cures and prayers. It should be mentioned that for each sickness there are definite
[782] melodies, texts, and dance steps. The same is true of the prayers with which the individual men address the gigantic animal and plant spirits (hekurá, see p. 200) before and after a journey, after slaying a large game animal, before planting a roça (forest clear-
[276] ing), after a successful harvest, etc. All these magic practices, however, may take place only in the snuff-powder intoxication (see p. 201 ).

During the training the candidates may not speak to any member of the tribe; during this time they are regarded as dead
884 and after two months achieve an initiatory rebirth. Purely ex-
302 ternally, one recognizes the two candidates by their body painting,
825 which consists of six vertical serpentine lines drawn with urucú
86 on abdomen and chest. These lines are a symbolic representation of the surucucu (Lachesis muta L.), the most dangerous

Surárq
Pakidai

/79 cont./

241 wood is well dried out, the clearing is set afire and the potash that remains constitutes fertilizer at the same time. Large trunks, stumps, and branches that did not burn up are simply left lying [361] and the crops are planted in between (Ill. 37). Only in the center of the clearing is a circle about 50-60 meters in diameter completely cleaned up, for here an open or closed circular maloka [622] is erected. This roça (forest clearing) -- hikarf --, which surrounds the community house, is then divided up by the chief among the individual families, so that they may plant here banana plants, pupunha palms, manioc, taioba, carâ, cotton, [462] tobacco, etc. (368). Clearing and planting, along with weeding,

[184]

368. Since an interest in agriculture has not been aroused in all families, however, it happens that some may relinquish their share, which is then worked by another family.

falls to the men; the women help only with the harvest. Since [134] the soil is very infertile, however, /80/ for it has only a thin humus layer which is constantly being leached out by the tropical rains, the cultivation of tubers is possible for at most three years (369).

[132]

369. The luxuriant growth of the forest may be explained only by the humidity and warmth of the climate, which, like hothouse air, accelerates the circulation of nutrients.

241 Then the work of clearing and burning off begins anew beyond
366 the previous circular strip of field. This may be repeated several times, so that the maloka is finally surrounded by three, four, or more ring-shaped fields, until one day the tribe builds its maloka
245 at another place and lays out new fields. Banana trees and pupunha palms are left standing in the old clearings, but are always planted also in the new ones, since these fruit trees yield for 6-8 years or 50 years (pupunha palm); their fruits are regularly harvested, even on long-abandoned, distant fields.

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema



But for all this bad luck, we had one undeniable stroke of good: the weather, extraordinarily enough, remained fine. We were now in April, when the dry season is at its height, but we knew that in these parts 'dry season' is a somewhat theoretical term. In some years, there just isn't one at all, and now that it was supposed to be at its height the rains might burst over our heads at any moment and reduce us to a sorry plight, on these clay hills, with hundreds of streams to cross. In fair weather the forest floor was clean, the air fresh and visibility excellent. Marching was easy, and had an excellent psychological effect.

At the first of the hills, when the track turned aside from the Aracosa banks, we came into a chaos of fallen trees. They stayed with us the whole day, all along the ridge where the path led. Enrico and I were ahead, and at one point we lost the track. Taking our bearings as best we could, we turned back, but found ourselves once more among fallen trees. The havoc must have been caused by a tornado. This is a rare phenomenon, and one we had never encountered in forest country, where the dank and the constant rain keep the atmosphere in a state of equilibrium, which tends to ward off the storm. It must have been the genuinely dry season we were enjoying which had encouraged the hurricane. We were fortunate not to have walked into the middle of it ourselves: with trees being torn up and hurled down we should have been running new and serious risks to life and limb.

For the rest of that day we were trying to find the track, keeping our direction hopefully to the north. But it was late in the afternoon before we saw the Guayca again—thanks to a shot we heard quite close. Great was our relief. The sound of Uarema's gun had raised our hopes, and when at last we caught sight of the Indians from a distance we noticed that they were carrying something wrapped in leaves. But it wasn't game. Uarema had fired at a crane, but missed it. The parcels contained honey which they had found in the tree-trunks blown down by the wind. We gave silent thanks to the storm for strewing honey in our path, as in the old myths, and that night we drank a mixture of honey and water like the warriors of long ago and ate nothing but a handful of *poloimos* gathered on the way. Wild honey, very runny and slightly acid, is sometimes fermented already if it has been stored in the hollow trees for very long. To drink it gives one a certain alcoholic euphoria which with weak, starving men such as we were results in a state of complete prostration. We slept the clock round from dusk to dawn—twelve hours.

/436 cont./

• 132 The rains at El Platanal are copious, and there is no true dry season there. There is never a day when one can feel safe from rain if he does not have a roof over him. The longest dry period which I have heard of was ten /maps appear here/ /437/ days. Droughts are so unknown that nobody thinks about the fact that rain is necessary for the crops. In El Platanal, almost all of the winds and the rainstorms come from the east.

137 The basin of the Upper Orinoco is covered by a tropical forest. Above the savanna at La Esmeralda, meadows are virtually nonexistent. There is one hillside on the north bank of the Upper Ocama which is covered with grass, but aside from this, and a few rocky slopes where not even grass grows, the tree cover is practically uninterrupted, with the exception of the clearings opened by the currents of water and the hand of man.

133 If one climbs the hill at El Platanal on a clear day, he will see an extensive plain toward the north. On the northwestern horizon rise the distant peaks of Duida and Marahuaca. These seem to blend into the even more distant montañas of the Upper Padamo and the Ventuari River farther to the north. Following these mountains toward the east with the eyes, one almost believes that he can make out the boundaries of Brazil from the headwaters of the Ventuari River down to the headwaters of the Ocamo. Then, looking toward the east, one can see the entire area between the Ocamo and Orinoco rivers, full of mountains which are not very high, but which are impressive because they are no near. But the north and northwest of Platanal between the Ocamo and Orinoco rivers is the part nearest to the plain described above.

Toward the south there is a narrow plain along the Orinoco River, then hills which are combined with the mountains of the headwaters of the Orinoco to the east and the mountains of the Upper Mavaca to the south. Then, looking toward the southwest and the west, there is the extensive plain of the Mavaca River, interrupted only by a few isolated mountains. Beyond this plain are the mountain ranges which, beginning at the headwaters of the Mavaca, extend toward the west and then toward the north, almost as far as the Orinoco itself.

Kreibŏwei population was in need of an ally to aid them in their raids against Patanowĕ-tedi. Shortly after they moved to Kreibŏwei they made friendly contact with a Shamatari village, then under the leadership of Riakowĕ, located on the Mavaca River. The Kreibŏwei-tedi began visiting Riakowĕ's village and entered into feasting relationships with his followers.

Riakowĕ's followers were related to the Shamatari with whom the Kreibŏwei-tedi were at war: Sibarariwĕ's village. Sibarariwĕ persuaded Riakowĕ to invite the Kreibŏwei-tedi to a feast during which the two Shamatari groups planned to kill as many men as they could and abduct women. By doing this Sibarariwĕ would avenge the murder of his older brother, Ruwahiwĕ, who was treacherously killed about 10 years earlier by the Kreibŏwei-tedi, when the latter lived at Patanowĕ-tĕka.

The Kreibŏwei-tedi accepted the feast invitation and went to Riakowĕ's village in the dry season (i.e., December through March) of 1950-51. Sibarariwĕ's followers, along with a party of men from Hasabŏwĕ-tedi, were concealed in the jungle outside Riakowĕ's village. Shortly after arriving at the village, the Kreibŏwei-tedi men were attacked by Riakowĕ's men with sharpened staves and axes, and eleven of them were killed. Those that managed to break out of the palisades were shot from ambush by Sibarariwĕ's followers, along with the Hasabŏwĕ-tedi, resulting in the wounding of a large number of Kreibŏwei-tedi men. Only six or seven women were seized by the Shamatari; but, the greediness of the Shamatari

721 The major effect of these raids, apart from the ten lives
722 they claimed, was that the Patanowë-tedi had to move fre-
361 quently from one site to another. The Monou-tedi, who were raiding the Patanowë-tedi, were being raided intensively also. They, too, had to move frequently to avoid the raids. Both
*[528] groups had to rely on allies to give them refuge during the
• [32] dry season, the time of the year when raiding is most intense.
[221] It will be apparent below how crucial allies are to villages
[141] that are being raided frequently, and how agricultural
726 practices necessitate these allies. Finally, the events
602 discussed below will illustrate the degree to which consan-
*628 guineal ties between mutually hostile villages are able to mitigate the hostilities between these villages.

The war between Monou-tedi and
*628 Patanowë-tedi

922 After the Mamowei-tedi group split at the site of
*[621] Patanowë in the early '40s, the two factions entered into a
[361] period of hostility that lasted until one of the factions, the present groups of Bisaasi-tedi and Monou-tedi, moved out of the area. Raiding between the two factions ceased after 1950, and each group entered into political alliances with unrelated neighboring villages.

728 In the middle '50s, a rapprochement between the two
*624 factions was attempted. A few individuals from Monou-tedi
628 began visiting Patanowë-tedi, and one of them, Torokoiwë, was
[58] given two wives by the Patanowë-tedi. The rapprochement, how-
[583] ever, was never effected and the political relationships between

villages (Bisaasi-tedi, Mǫmaribǫwei-tedi, and Karohi-tedi). These ashes were to be consumed prior to revenge raids on the Patanowǟ-tedi. The Monou-tedi then set about transporting plantain cuttings to their new garden and spent the next several weeks working on the garden. They intended to delay their revenge raid until the beginning of the rainy season in order to make it difficult for the Patanowǟ-tedi to raid them in return. The Monou-tedi moved into Bisaasi-tedi at the end of March both for military protection and for respite from their heavy agricultural labors. They stayed with the Bisaasi-tedi until the end of April, fearing that they would be raided by the Patanowǟ-tedi if they returned to their own village before the rains started. They also planned to raid the Patanowǟ-tedi from Bisaasi-tedi at the beginning of the wet season, knowing that a revenge raid from Patanowǟ-tedi would be difficult once the rains started. They could return to their own village during the rainy season, as the jungle separating their village from the Patanowǟ-tedi is inundated at this time of the year and cannot be traversed.

On April 19th the Bisaasi-tedi sponsored a mortuary feast for the slain Monou-tedi headman in preparation for the revenge raid. The participants in the revenge raid were to include the Mǫmaribǫwei-tedi, but they did not arrive as scheduled, so the raid was delayed until the 21st. Only a few Mǫmaribǫwei-tedi arrived to participate in the raid, and the Bisaasi-tedi immediately suspected that the Mǫmaribǫwei-tedi were plotting to abduct women from them after

726 the men left on the raid. One faction of Bisaasi-tedi did
[122] not participate in the raid in order to protect the women while the others were gone.

The raiding party left on the 21st and returned on
[36] the 2nd of May. They killed one Patanowë-tedi at Shihota, a site abandoned in 1949 by the Bisaasi-tedi now being used by the Patanowë-tedi. The Patanowë-tedi chased the raiders, outflanking them at one point, and shot one of the Monou-tedi, badly wounding him. The man, Konorelwë, was pierced with a bamboo point just above his heart. Although the tip of the point protruded out his back, he recovered.

726 The Patanowë-tedi could not avenge this killing until
36 the rains subsided. Accordingly, the Monou-tedi returned to
*628 their own village after they retreated to Bisaasi-tedi on
[221] May 2. They remained in their village until June 20, at
[32] which time they rejoined the Bisaasi-tedi; they did so because travel through the jungle was becoming possible by that date, as the rains subsided early in 1965. On July 10 the Bisaasi-tedi and the Monou-tedi, assisted by their allies, the Mamaribëwei-tedi and Reyabobëwei-tedi, raided the Patanowë-tedi again, leaving from Bisaasi-tedi. The raid proved to be unsuccessful, as the Patanowë-tedi had moved into the village of their only ally, the Ashadowë-tedi. All the raiders except those from Monou-tedi wanted to turn back, as the trail to Ashadowë-tedi was a poor one and retreat would have been difficult. The raiding party did turn back, but the Monou-tedi were angry with their allies for forcing them to

The jungle provides a number of hazards to the barefoot traveler in that most species of palm have long, sharp spines protruding from their trunks or leaf stems. The most common and recurrent injury the Yąnomamö sustain is thorns in the feet. A party of ten men can rarely travel an hour without one of them stopping to extract a thorn from his foot. This is always accompanied by hisses and clicks of pain on the part of the victim, who gouges the thorn out with either an arrow point or another thorn. Their feet have thick calluses on them, but because the trails frequently cross streams and swamps, the calluses soften and are easily pierced by thorns.

Another, but rarer, hazard is snakes.[2] There are always a few cases of snake bite in each village every year, although few of them are fatal. Most snake-bite victims recover from the wound with no ill side effects. I treated two cases of snake bite that were like this. But a few bites are severe enough to cause the loss of a limb. One of my better acquaintances, a young man of some thirty years, lost a leg because of a snake bite when he was about fifteen years old, and will spend the rest of his life hopping on one leg, a form of locomotion he has mastered so thoroughly that he almost manages to keep up with the group when they visit other villages.

Most of the intervillage traveling is done from September through April, the dry season. For the remainder of the year the trails, or substantial portions of them, are underwater. At this time the rains are frequent and heavy, and the small streams that can be easily crossed on foot in the dry season become impassable torrents. Small lakes replace the marshy low ground, and communication between villages all but ceases. As the Yąnomamö are an inland people and avoid locating their villages near large streams, all travel is done on foot, and each village becomes an isolated entity at the peak of the wet season (June).[3] If the group must travel, it will make simple vine and pole bridges over the smaller streams. A pair of slender poles is stuck into the river and crossed to form an X-frame. Vines are used to lash the poles together where they intersect, and another pole is laid from the bank to the X-frame, also secured by vines. Then another pair of poles is stuck into the stream and lashed to form another X-frame. The long pole is then extended out further from the bank, and so on, until the stream is bridged. A vine railing is attached to the protruding members of the X-frames. The bridges usually last only a short time. The first heavy rain will swell the stream and the current will wash it away.

TECHNOLOGY Much of Yąnomamö technology is like the pole-and-vine bridge: crude, but very effective, and not destined to last for any great period of time. The only durable artifact produced is a crude, poorly fired clay pot. It is nearly an inch thick at the bottom and tapers to almost nothing at the brim. Consequently, it breaks very easily. For this reason, women, regarded as clumsy, are rarely allowed to touch or handle them. When the clay pots are used, the men do the cooking, as, for example, during feasts. The pot is made by the coil technique: The untempered clay is kneaded to the proper consistency by hand, rolled into long, slender ropes, and these, in turn, placed on top of each other to form a continuous rope of clay. The coils are then scraped flat so that the interior and exterior of the pot are smooth. The conical-shaped pot is allowed to dry in the shade, then fired by placing brush and wood over it. The end product is

[2] Two percent of all adult deaths are due to snake bite; 54 percent are due to malaria, and other epidemic diseases (Chagnon 1966) and 24 percent of adult males die in warfare.

[3] The Yąnomamö began moving their villages out to navigable rivers after 1955. Up to that time there was only one village, Mahekodo-teri, located on a navigable portion of the Orinoco River.

Today, however, steel tools are quite common, being provided by the several missionaries who have recently located posts at a number of locations in Yąnomamö territory. The tools that they give to their local people are eventually traded inland to more remote villages so that all the Yąnomamö, even those who have not yet had any direct contact with outsiders, now have steel tools.[7] Before the missionaries arrived, the Yąnomamö occasionally obtained steel tools from the Carib-speaking Makiritare Indians, who have long been in contact with civilization. Some of the Makiritare made periodic canoe trips in the last century as far east as Georgetown in order to obtain these tools. Kąobawä told me that when he was a young man, his village had a single piece of steel, a portion of a broken machete that came ultimately from the Makiritare Indians by way of several intermediate Yąnomamö villages. Everybody in the village used this tool when they made their gardens. It was hafted on a split stick and used as an axe. I have seen broken machetes used in this fashion in the more remote, steel-poor villages.

The Yąnomamö usually fell the big trees toward the end of the wet season, although I have seen them do it at all times of the year. In general, the clearing of the land tends to be an activity of the wet season while the burning is done during the dry season, but this schedule is by no means rigorous. An adequate burning can be achieved at the peak of the rainy season, provided that there are two days of sunshine in succession. The dead brush and the leaves of the large trees dry out rather quickly in the sun, provided that they have been lying on the ground for a sufficiently long period of time. The trunks of the large trees are never burned, so that a newly cleared garden is strewn with logs lying helter-skelter all over the cleared patch. These serve as boundaries between individual gardens, as the crops belong to the person who plants them.

Each man clears his own land. Brothers will usually clear adjacent portions of land and, if their father is still living, his garden will be among theirs. The headman of the village generally has the largest garden, as he must produce larger quantities of food; he is obliged to give food away at feasts. He can frequently enlist the aid of other men to help him make a large garden. Kąobawä, for example, is helped by a younger brother, a brother-in-law, and the latter's son. Once in a while one of his sisters who lives in a different village visits for a long stretch of time, and her son-in-law also helps Kąobawä work in the garden during these visits.

After the brush has dried out and the larger trees felled, the portable timber and brush is gathered up into piles and burned, each man having several fires going in his own patch, to which he hauls the brush as he gathers it up. Usually, the fires are built under or next to one of the larger logs. In this way the logs dry out even more completely and can be easily chopped up by the women for firewood. The ashes are not scattered to improve soil fertility.

If the new site is a great distance from the previous garden, the men will have to make numerous trips between the two sites in order to transport the plantain cuttings. If an ally's village is closer to the new garden site, some cuttings can be borrowed from his gardens, thereby reducing the transportation labor. Each mature plantain or banana plant sends out suckers which sprout a few feet away from the adult stalk. When the Yąnomamö cut the bunch of plantains or bananas from the producing plant, they also cut the entire plant down to permit the younger suckers to receive the sunlight. The larger

[7] One missionary told me that he has given the residents of his village approximately 3000 machetes over the past eight years! These are traded inland to more remote Yąnomamö.